

CHAPTER 14

FAMILY MEMBER EMPLOYMENT

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CHAPTER 14: FAMILY MEMBER EMPLOYMENT

Finding employment overseas, as family members of U.S. Government employees assigned abroad, presents both challenges and opportunities for those who want to continue a career or wish to find meaningful employment. Although opportunities to work at U.S. embassies and consulates as well as on the local economy have increased, the emergence of the two-career family in American society has placed greater demands on the system to further expand job opportunities. Useful, then, are the number of resources available to help meet the challenges of frequent job searches and a lack of continuity in establishing a career. As a family member, be sure to set clear objectives so you can manage the challenges while taking advantage of the opportunities a move might create.

CONTACTS

The [Family Liaison Office](http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/index.html) (FLO) (<http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/index.html>) is your primary point of contact for employment questions. FLO provides job search guidance for overseas moves and on the Washington area job market. Services FLO offers to assist family members seeking employment include: the Family Member Employment Report (FAMER) (see below); functional training enrollment for spouses; employment workshops; individual employment counseling; specific employment materials on each post; information on local economy opportunities, and within the Mission programs such as the Professional Associates, Consular Associates, Information Management Assistants, and Hard-to-Fill positions; information on bilateral work agreements and de facto work arrangements; and resume critiquing. Through the Direct Communication Project (see below), FLO sends information about current employment programs and relevant regulations. FLO can also direct you to other sources of help.

The Transition Center's Overseas Briefing Center (OBC) has a wealth of post-specific information that can also be helpful in identifying employment options before you go to post. The material in the briefing box, the post report, and the newsletter can be used to generate ideas for employment opportunities. The OBC's Returnee File contains the names of people who have recently been at your post and are willing to answer questions. When speaking with returnees, ask for suggestions of specific organizations or firms that may be looking for someone with your skills. The Transition Center's Training Division and FLO also offer a series of joint employment planning workshops, panel discussions, and lunchtime seminars throughout the year. Contact [Transition Center Training](mailto:FSITCTraining@state.gov) at FSITCTraining@state.gov.

FLO advises people to contact the [Community Liaison Office](http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/CLO/clocoordinators.pdf) (CLO) (<http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/CLO/clocoordinators.pdf>) or Administrative Officer at your assigned post. The post is often not aware of all new arrivals interested in employment, so it is important to email or fax the CLO, HR, or Administrative Officer telling him/her of your expected arrival date and type of employment you will be seeking. Enclose a resume or Federal Application and ask for advice and/or referrals. The CLO or the Administrative Officer cannot submit applications for you, but they can keep you in mind and may advise you of any appropriate upcoming employment opportunity. Remember that the CLO is only a resource; you are the manager of your job search.

The geographic or functional bureaus within the Department of State can also be sources of information on job openings. Check with the employee spouse's career counselor or personnel officer, or the bureau's post management officer (PMO). These officers can often give you resources or referrals in your career field. If, for example, your area of expertise is one in which

USAID has programs (e.g., health, environment, urban planning, or population), the USAID Contract Management Office or the appropriate USAID program office may be able to provide a list of firms or organizations that have USAID contracts. Check the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse website (<http://www.dec.org>) to order free USAID reports. In addition, check other federal agencies' websites to see what other agencies are represented at your post or contact their Washington offices.

The Career Development Resource Center (CDRC) (<http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/csp/cdrc>) is a free resource for Foreign Service family members. The professional career counselors offer individual appointments and group programs on career-related topics. CDRC's library has books, newspapers, and audio and videotapes. Their computer stations have software covering career development, federal government application information, and training information.

RESOURCES

The Family Member Employment Report (FAMER)

(<http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/employment/famer.html>) is a primary resource for job hunters preparing for an overseas assignment. This database provides an accurate picture of the employment situation inside and outside the mission. It describes the working environment on the local economy and which job skills are in highest demand for each post. Moreover, it includes an electronic job bulletin board, listing jobs as they become available at specific posts. If working is a critical factor for you, check out the FAMER during the bidding process to determine posts where employment is difficult.

FLO's Direct Communication Project

(<http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/publications.html>) provides up-to-date information to Foreign Service employees and family members. Since its inception in May 1985, the Family Liaison Office has routinely published the newsletter *FS Direct*, now available via email. In addition, FLO has published and makes available over 40 papers covering education and youth, family member employment, support for personal contingency planning and evacuations, and other issues that are an integral part of Foreign Service life. A collection of employment-related papers and newsletters are available on the FLO web site or by request to <mailto:flo@state.gov>.

The Network Newsletter

(<http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/employment/washjobseach.html>) is another useful resource. This bi-weekly job listing, published by the Family Liaison Office, connects those looking for a job in the Washington, DC area with current job listings both in federal government and in private companies. Email flo@state.gov to subscribe. The Network is an electronic newsletter. If you are returning to the Washington area, start early and subscribe from overseas.

Global Employment Monthly

(<http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/employment/overseasjob.html>) is a newsletter for Foreign Service family members looking for employment overseas. In addition to relevant articles, each issue features current job openings in selected countries overseas. To subscribe, email <mailto:flo@state.gov>

The Spouse Networking Assistance Program

(<http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/employment/SNAP.html>), FLO's newest initiative, is a pilot employment program in 10 countries to assist family members with the job search on the local economy. Participating countries are Canada, Mexico, Chile, Egypt, Singapore, Korea, Japan,

Poland, Belgium, and the United Kingdom. If you are interested in working on the local economy of a SNAP post, contact the Family Liaison Office or the local employment advisor (LEA) at the SNAP post.

To get a head start on building teaching skills that can be used abroad, the Foreign Affairs Spouses Teacher Training Project (FAST-TRAIN) (<http://www.gse.gmu.edu/fasttrain>) prepares elementary and secondary teachers for work at international schools. The program was initiated by the Office of Overseas Schools and is sponsored by the George Mason University Graduate School of Education.

TYPES OF OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT

Overseas employment for family members falls into several categories: working within the U.S. mission, working on the local economy, telework, or self-employment. Each has advantages and disadvantages that may change from post to post, so it is important to do careful research. Here are some guidelines to help you start, but be sure to check with the Family Liaison Office, the CLO, or the HR officer at post to clarify your questions.

Employment within the U.S. Mission may be with the Department of State or other U.S. Government agencies. Salary earned in the U.S. Government position, regardless of hiring mechanism, is taxable, both federal income tax and state tax where applicable. Jobs within the mission are distinguished by hiring mechanisms that define the terms and conditions of employment. Family members should understand the unique terms of any appointment before accepting a position. For example, the FMA is a hiring mechanism that allows family members working at post to make contributions toward the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) and participate in the Thrift Savings Plan. The FMA runs for five years. FMA employee names are entered into Intermittent No Work Schedule (INWS) when they are between jobs, which means that their names remain on the Department of State personnel rolls. FMAs on INWS status can apply for available positions, within the Department of State, with the area of consideration restricted to "State Department Employees Only" when returning for a tour in Washington.

There should be a Post Employment Committee at each post to ensure equity in the selection process for mission positions. The positions must be widely advertised so that all qualified have the opportunity to apply. Family members may compete against local resident Americans and foreign nationals, depending on the job. According to Subchapter 8200, Appendix A 3 FAM 123.8-4I, American family members on the best-qualified list will be given preference over residents. Candidates should be aware that competition for jobs is often intense. Language ability, salary demands, and issues of continuity are considerations.

Family members who work 52 weeks in U.S. Government-appropriated fund positions under a local hire appointment within a 10-year period and have received a fully successful or better performance evaluation, have the opportunity to earn **Executive Order Eligibility 12721** (<http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/employment/eoe.html>). Under this authority, a family member who meets all other requirements may be appointed by an agency non-competitively to a competitive service position within the United States during a period of 3 years after return to the United States. Family members serving in appropriated fund positions overseas should check with the HR office to make certain that a performance evaluation is written and filed.

Family members interested in government employment must be aware that hiring practices can change quickly. Downsizing, budget shifts, and budget cuts have a direct impact on employment

opportunities for family members at home and abroad. Many agencies are utilizing more contract employees for both part-time and regular work. Working on contract can be very interesting and lucrative, depending on the project. The down side is that contract work does not count as creditable government service. It may, on the other hand, provide meaningful work and build an interesting resume.

In addition to the foreign affairs agencies (the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, Foreign Agricultural Service, Foreign Commercial Service), other federal agencies at post could include the following. Check the agency websites for more information:

- Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) www.aphis.usda.gov
- Centers for Disease Control www.cdc.gov
- Customs www.customs.treas.gov
- Department of Energy (DOE) www.doe.gov
- Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) www.usdoj.gov/dea
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) www.fbi.gov
- Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) www.faa.gov
- Geological Survey (USGS) www.usgs.gov
- Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) www.ins.usdoj.gov
- Internal Revenue Service (IRS) www.irs.ustreas.gov
- Labor Department www.dol.gov
- Library of Congress www.loc.gov
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) www.nasa.gov
- Peace Corps www.peacecorps.gov
- Treasury www.ustreas.gov

With the permission of the host government, EFMs may also find employment on the local economy. The Department of State has bilateral work agreements with over 60 countries and reciprocal de facto arrangements with many others. FLO maintains a list of the countries with which the U.S. has bilateral agreements and de facto arrangements. One way to begin a search is to contact internationally based American Chambers of Commerce. A list is available on the FLO website (<http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/index.html>).

Family members who work on the local economy may be asked to relinquish their civil and administrative immunity with respect to matters arising out of their employment. Questions on waiver of diplomatic privileges or immunities should be directed to the Family Liaison Office.

Working on the local economy also subjects family members to host country taxation, and they may be required to contribute to the host country's social security system. If they work for an American employer (a citizen or resident of the United States, an American company, or its foreign subsidiary), tax responsibilities include U.S. federal income tax, and social security tax. Such employees may be eligible for an overseas earned income exclusion or, if taxes have been paid to the host country, a foreign tax credit, but not both. Consult a professional tax advisor. The Transition Center presents a course entitled U.S. Tax Issues and Foreign-Earned Income that covers these issues. Call 703-302-7268 or e-mail FSITCTraining@state.gov for more information.

Telecommuting, for some, offers another employment option for Foreign Service spouses. Employers realize the costs involved in hiring and training new people. Foreign Service spouses who hold jobs in the United States should impress upon their current employer the possibility of

continuing to work from afar. The Family Liaison Office can assist you with assuring that you have met the regulations related to telework in a foreign country.

Self-employment is an increasingly popular means of employment for spouses with portable skills such as tutoring, catering, writing, or photography. Changes in the regulations (see 15 FAM 246.2) governing the use of U.S. Government-owned and leased properties now make it possible to set up home-based businesses. Ask people who are familiar with the host country about the feasibility of self-employment and find out about pertinent legal requirements, work regulations, and the like. Keep in mind that there are tax implications involved with self-employment. It is also important to learn about the local regulations covering self-employment, how to obtain a work permit and how to register the business with the local labor authorities. The Family Liaison Office can assist you in your research.

TRAINING AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Even with all of the resources available, it is still important for the individual family member to have as much knowledge as possible. Remember that whether you think of yourself as career minded or not, the work that you do in Washington is related to the work that you do overseas. In fact, many family members find that their transience requires taking extra care to research possible jobs. You may want to take training or do a volunteer project instead of paid employment to help you attain additional job skills. Such added skills may help with future job searches.

Family members who want to take time to develop skills or knowledge can get information on adult education programs from *Education Options for Foreign Service Family Members*, available through FLO. Adult education programs are also listed in FLO's *Adult Education Opportunities* paper (<http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/FLO/train/paper28.pdf>).

Another resource is the organization Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW). AAFSW members interested in continuing their studies are eligible for a low interest loan. Contact AAFSW (AAFSW@starpower.net) directly for more information.

Functional training (Consular, Financial Management, General Services, Computer and Human Resources) at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) may be scheduled for family members on a space-available basis. Normally, training must be linked to an ongoing assignment and the needs of the Department. Spouses of employees of agencies other than the Department of State are not eligible for functional training, except for the Basic Consular course. In this case, a tuition waiver must be requested by post and approved by FSI prior to enrollment. Completion of training does not guarantee employment. Contact FLO (<http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/train/training.html>) for more information and to apply for training. The following courses are offered by the Transition Center's Training Division. Call 703-302-7268 or e-mail <mailto:FSITCTraining@state.gov> for more information:

- Employment Planning for The Mobile Foreign Service Spouse (MQ 700)
- Post Options for Employment and Training Overseas (MQ 703)
- Targeting the Job Market (MQ 704)
- English Teaching Seminar: An Employment Option (MQ 107)
- Making Presentations: From Design to Delivery (MQ 111)

Volunteering can be an excellent way to explore a career field, gain experience, or learn new skills. Short-term volunteer experiences can be fit into those transition times when you are settling into the new location. Target and document the volunteer experience so that it helps build your career plan. Even if you do not have a career plan, documented volunteer experience can serve you well in an emergency. Some expenses incurred in connection with volunteering, job search, or education and training that advance your career may be tax deductible. Check with your tax advisor or the Internal Revenue Service.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Family Liaison Office (M/DGHR/FLO)

Room 1239
Department of State
Washington, DC 20520-7512
Tel: (202) 647-1076
Fax: (202) 647-1670
Intranet: <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/index.html>
Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/>

Transition Center

George P. Schultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center
4000 Arlington Boulevard, E2126
Arlington, Virginia
Tel: (703) 302-7277
Fax: (703) 302-7452
Intranet: <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc>
Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/>
Overseas Briefing Center: FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov
Training Division: FSITCTraining@state.gov
Security Overseas Seminar: FSISOS@state.gov

Career Development Resource Center

Columbia Plaza (SA-1),
Room L-321
2401 E Street NW
Washington, DC 20522-0108
Tel: (202) 663-3042
Fax: (202) 663-3146
Intranet: <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/csp/cdrc>
Internet: <http://www.state.gov/www/cdrc/index.html>

Office of Overseas Schools (A/OS)

Room H328, SA-1
Department of State
Washington, DC 20522-0132
Tel: (202) 261-8200
Fax: (202) 261-8224
Intranet: <http://aopros.a.state.gov>
Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/a/os/>

AAFSW Adult Education Loan Committee

5121 MacArthur Boulevard, Suite 36

Washington, DC 20016

Tel: (202) 362-6514

Fax: (202) 362-6589

E-mail: moffice@aafsw.org

Internet: <http://www.aafsw.org>